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## Nikola Tesla Radiated a Blue Light

# Nikola Tesla Radiated a Blue Light

Dusan Makavejev

## Applied Optimism

1

Mobil's series of TV commercials on the theme "The Spirit of America Is the Spirit of Achievement" (excellent both in concept and realization) is an example of the Applied Optimism in the best tradition of Steichen's *Family of Man*.

2

I am suspicious toward the subjects of Optimism, Health, and Patriotism.

Happy birthday.

But this hag is two hundred years old, and still so lively.

Eternal youth.

It's good you squeezed out those boils. The clean face is important. Scars are less ugly than those red-greenish carbuncles.

Here's mud in your eye.

The Chinese are said to count years backward: you always have the number of years *remaining* to you, not the number of years you have *spent*. At birth, you are seventy-five; afterward your years diminish. After seventy-five you show clear profit.

But, anyhow, they have no intention of asking for anyone's permission.

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*Dusan Makavejev is a Yugoslavian filmmaker. Among the films he has directed are WR—Mysteries of the Organism (1971) and Sweet Movie (1975).*

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This paper was originally read at the 1976 International Conference "The United States in the World," September 27 to October 1, in Washington, D.C., at the Smithsonian Institution.

3

The story about the elephant in the china shop. Who cares about china anymore? It's pure Buster Keaton, a merry chaos.

Ask children: do they want small porcelain figurines forever or a five-minute ride on the elephant's back?

The elephant who wanted to stamp out a mosquito eventually came out as that mouse who wanted to fuck a cow.

4

The Principle of Socialist Realism: speak about Positive Hero, Reflect Reality (but recognizing the elements of Future in it).

Comparing most popular Russian and American films we shall easily ascertain that Hollywood is much better at understanding and realizing the Principles of Socialist Realism.

5

Popeye the Sailor influenced me positively, and, already in my fourth decade, I still inordinately love spinach.

Among the animals I like mice best. In every mouse hides the Spirit of Mickey Mouse.

## Ambivalent Memories

1

I was five years old. My uncle Steva took me to the movies. Mickey, Goofy, Horatio, and Clarabelle and Company formed an orchestra. They started playing and then a terrible wind, a storm, came. They flew in all directions, still playing. That was irresistible.

The audience giggled and I was choking with laughter. Then horror began. Something was leaking down my leg, wet and warm, a puddle was spreading. Luckily, it was noisy in the cinema and people around me didn't notice anything.

Out of enthusiasm I have wet myself. Oh, shame!

Uncle Steva took me out in a hurry.

2

My mother is seventy-two and she still likes telling how I was as curly as Shirley Temple—forty years ago.



## 3

Around my eighth year, after seeing *Robin Hood*, I believed I was in love with Olivia de Havilland.

In fact, I wanted to be like Errol Flynn. That is to say, I wanted to be like Robin Hood.

Then *Young Tom Edison* came, and I wanted to publish my own newspaper, i.e., I wanted to be like Mickey Rooney, i.e., like Tom Edison, i.e., like Andy Hardy.

## 4

A novel entitled *Chicago* was coming out in the form of Tuesday and Friday booklets. In it, a mad scientist had invented a matter called *crystalopyr*, which reflected sun-rays in such a way that, on one side, everything turned into ice, while everything burned on the other. A *crystalopyr* plane was in production; the destruction of the world was in preparation.

## 5

A year later, at 6 a.m. on April 6, 1941, German incendiary bombs made the prophecy of *Chicago* come true and burned 30 percent of Belgrade. Twenty thousand inhabitants of Belgrade died on that day, before breakfast, as Fodor's guide puts it. The town was turned into congeries of dolls' houses—houses without fronts disclosed intact apartments, dining rooms with chandeliers, dentists' offices.

## 6

German occupation began. My school was taken to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Snow White and the dwarfs spoke German. According to German custom, the film was dubbed in their language. We were offended.

## 7

Easter of '44 was a beautiful, sunny day. Humming came from the sky, the squadrons of Liberators sparkled. People waved at them, happy with the near-end of the war. Bombs started to thunder and raise dust. A maternity clinic in our neighborhood was hit. Babies were found in the tree-tops. There were thousands of dead civilians, but everybody was still glad to see the Allied planes.

## 8

The liberation came, Tito's partisans, and the Red Army. Roosevelt died. New peoples' power proclaimed three-day national mourning, cinemas were closed, there was no music in restaurants, for three days flags fluttered at half-mast. I wondered: have they buried him in his wheelchair?

## 9

People were overjoyed with American food packages (we had not seen chocolate for four years). However, one item caused consternation and general mockery—pork in the apple sauce. If you are really interested in "the absence of the U.S. influence," here it is: my people will *never* taste such muck as pork in the apple sauce.

## 10

What is the magic of chewing gum?

## 11

For months on end we ate powdered eggs (there were barrels and barrels of them). Everybody called this food "Truman's balls" (in our language we have the same word for "balls" and "eggs").

## 12

Twenty years later, Belgrade youth weekly *Mladost* conducted polls trying to find out who were the heroes of the contemporary young. At the top of the list: Che Guevara and John F. Kennedy.

## 13

Late sixties. The policy of open frontiers. With a Yugoslav passport you can travel to over fifty countries—without a visa.

The foreign influences become more complex every day.

Young playboy and criminal Milan Milošević (one of the legion of adventurers who went into the world after running around American crews making films in Belgrade) was found dead in the bathroom of Mickey Rooney's Hollywood house.

In a nice casket his body reaches Belgrade airport, expenses paid by Alain Delon. It is met by dozens of hysterical teen-age girls.

Milošević's mother tells all about her son, in a weekly magazine series.



Among other things, she produces a morbid detail: a few months later ("around Christmas," says Mom), Delon sent to his friend's mother a plastic bag with Milan's intestines, taken out during the embalming.

## 14

I live in Belgrade, at the corner of Lenin Boulevard and John F. Kennedy Street.

My mother-in-law lives in Charlie Chaplin Street.

## 15

Late sixties. Godard uses the following metaphors: "Walt Disney and blood," "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola."

## 16

In my last film, *Sweet Movie*, lovers make love in sugar; it ends in murder. Blood mixes with sugar (during the shooting we called this scene "the jam session"). I had in mind a scene from Resnais' *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* with lovers plastered with sand; the effect was very sensual—and unpleasant. I strived to make it pleasant.

Has this scene also been fathered by a need to "surpass" (or interpret) the ambivalence of the image-concept "Disney-blood"?

## "Drang Nach Westen" and Dangers of Linear Thinking

## 1

"To catch up and overtake America"—Stalin. In early and innocent days of my school activism, we read in Stalin what a communist should be.

He should display, says Uncle Joe, the combination of Bolshevik persistence and American practicality.

## 2

America served as a model to both Russian futurists and Lenin.

## 3

"To catch up and overtake America" is a fatal slogan. We already know from the ancient Greeks that even a rabbit cannot overtake a turtle. I know that many of my American friends do not enjoy having to run so much. I guess they were told as children: "Run so that nobody can overtake us."

## 4

I like Instant Coffee and Instant Soup.

When Instant Death was introduced, in 1945, as applied in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I caught myself, a thirteen-year-old boy, in a dilemma: I liked it very much, although I knew it wasn't nice that I liked it. Then everybody got Instant Excuse: Instant Death has brought Instant End of War.

Instant Beginning and Instant End.

## 5

The production of Absolute Happiness comes next. It is curious that this concept (the guided creation of generations of completely happy human beings) did not appear in Pavlov-oriented Soviet psychology, but at Harvard, with B. F. Skinner.

## 6

Where does it come from, this striving of America to make other nations happy—against their will?

## 7

The last three big wars were conducted by the USA in Asia: Japan, Korea, Vietnam. Did the first really bring the absolute victory? Did the second really secure status quo? Why does America—with so much pain and confusion—refuse to recognize traces of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence in the establishment of the national identities of Vietnam and Cuba?

## 8

For years humiliated and offended, heretics and dreamers, the hungry and those who "think differently" thronged to the West, to America. From the East Coast to the Rockies and beyond, there was always—more West. After World War II, this *Drang Nach Westen* has brought the Americans to the Far East.



9

We are scared by the discovery that the Far Westerners are identical with the Far Easterners and that they reject, "against their best interests," our concepts of time, history, nature, and civilization as well as our sado-masochistic-Christian concept of life, the best (and only) in the world.

10

Czech humorist Jaroslav Hašek has somewhere a group of people meeting every day in a beerhouse.

There, in the beerhouse, they found "The Party of the Moderate Progress within the Law."

The Americans could be considered members of the Party of Immoderate Progress outside Any Law.

## The Factory of Universal Dreams

1

Hollywood.

The national pride of Yugoslavs: Slavko Vorkapich, Karl Malden, Peter Bogdanovich.

2

Another contribution of our national genius to Hollywood: *Vampir*, the only Serbian word that has entered all the languages of the world.

Vampire (F, fr, G vampir, of Slav origin; akin to Serb *vampir* vampire, Russ *upyr*) 1: a bloodsucking ghost or reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from a grave and wander about by night sucking the blood of persons asleep and causing their death.

*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*

3

A real vampire: the biggest living WW II war criminal Andrija Artuković, the creator of the well-known extermination camp Jasenovac (Croatia, Yugoslavia), personally responsible for the execution of 500,000 Serbians, Jews, and Gypsies, lives, scot-free, in Los Angeles.

4

On the occasion of America's 200th birthday, David Robinson writes about the American Cinema as the Universal Dream.

5

In fact, the everyday life of America in its paradisaical aspects of Freedom and Affluence, in its infernal aspects of Freedom of Sin, Greed, and Lust, with its bursting of all dams preventing Orgy of Desires—represents the wide open playground of the Universal Dream. All practical operations (economic, social, cultural, and private) are performed in the oil of the Universal Dream, providing everything with damping and acceleration.

6

A fascinating situation: a TV commentator blows out his brains on camera. After this, I cannot watch TV news in America without hoping, in some dark corner of my soul, that maybe now this commentator I am seeing and hearing . . .

7

In America there is no shame of desires. Since a half century ago, Europe has scientifically ascertained the immorality of desires, but it still retains the repression of desires. Legitimacy of desires in America makes it possible to use them as fuel.

## Energy

1

Does America know certain secrets of mobilizing human energies which are unfathomable to the "rest of the world?"

Discontinuity?

2

A self-mocking Serbian story from World War I. At the time of the Saloniki front, a child is drowning in the harbor of Saloniki.

A crowd watches from the shore.

Suddenly, a heroic Serbian soldier is in the water; he saves the child and reaps the applause of the spectators.

Afterward, on the shore, someone overhears him swearing: "If I get my hands on the motherfucker who pushed me in!"



## 3

Has not the whole of America come into being by a sort of voluntary "Who-Pushed-Me-In" technique? Millions swam across the ocean and, once on the other shore, went on living as best as they could.

They were applauded from the ancient shore.

To bring oneself to the point of no return.

## 4

Starting from zero.

The national income of Bangladesh is 70 dollars a year per inhabitant; of Yugoslavia, 1,060; of the USA 7,020.

But still everybody behaves as if starting from zero. Although the American "zero" is—7,020.

## 5

The childhood dream of Nikola Tesla, in a deep province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (today: Lika, Croatia, Yugoslavia) was to go to America and install a gigantic wheel at Niagara Falls which would produce unheard quantities of energy.

In 1884, Nikola Tesla (twenty-eight) comes out from the Immigration Office in Castle Garden, Manhattan, with four cents in his pocket. He works as an electrician, digs holes for two dollars a day, founds Tesla Electric Company, and creates the polyphase system of alternating current.

At the same time Edison and John Pierpont Morgan work steadfastly on the development of the direct current system. Edison's direct current has a maximum reach of one mile from the power station.

According to some stories, Edison and Morgan go around New York killing chickens with the alternating current in order to prove how dangerous it is. In 1888, with a million dollar check, George Westinghouse buys forty patents from Tesla—the complete system. Using the alternating current system, Tesla illuminates, on Westinghouse's behalf, the whole 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Westinghouse obtains the contract to build the Niagara power station. In 1896, Buffalo is illuminated by the alternating current coming from Niagara, 22 miles away.

Soon the whole of America is covered with pylons—the cheap energy can be obtained, like water, out of the wall, in every house.

Tesla's ultimate dreams were of the wireless transmission of electric energy, a system of interplanetary communication, and radio contact with the cosmos. In 1899, in Colorado Springs, he lighted two hundred bulbs, without use of wires, from a distance of 25 miles. He also produced manmade lightning flashes.

It was a poor eighty-year-old man who, in the early forties, fed pigeons every day in front of New York's Plaza Hotel and led a lonely life with a female pigeon at the Waldorf Astoria.

Seventy years earlier, he was a young man who had visions and nightmares, who had attacks of nausea at the sight of a peach, went berserk at the sight of pearls, and became ecstatic when faced with even, smooth surfaces or sparkling crystals, who could not work with numbers not divisible by three.

He claimed that in the moments of heightened creativity he was radiating a blue light.

## 6

In 1968 *Life* magazine published a cover photo of an astronaut on the Moon. Gary Burnstein (Ph.D. in Psychology, a passionate researcher of Nikola Tesla and Wilhelm Reich) draws my attention to the blue halo around the astronaut in the atmosphereless moonscape.

The experts convinced themselves that this blue halo was caused by some fault in the negative.

## 7

As far back as 1934, Reich explained to Erik Erikson that all living creatures radiate a blue light. Erikson did not believe him. Reich invited Erikson—it was in Denmark, during the summer vacation—to observe with him couples making love on the beach, in darkness. He asserted that the blue radiation, which becomes more intense during the sexual act, can be observed by the naked eye. From then on, Erikson considered Reich mad.

Many others considered Reich mad at the time of his death in Lewisburg prison, Pennsylvania, in 1956.

## 8

In the early fifties Reich was trying to draw public attention to poisonous masses of static air, hovering over cities like black clouds. A few years after his death, people started talking about the struggle against the pollution of the atmosphere and about black masses of static air.



## 9

It is quite superfluous to speak about freedom in America in old European terms of freedom as democracy.

In regard to the freedom of information, "free circulation of men and ideas," legal security of the individual, America is a few shades freer than the most progressive European democracies. This freedom, however, represents just a tiny part of American freedom, if we speak of Freedom understood as the radiation and chain reaction of Human Energy.

The old Europe expends enormous energies defending itself from the "abuses of freedom": public disorder, "chaos," "bad taste," "immorality," "nonsense," "stupidity."

The public and private life of the people in the European democracies is cut by series of meshes of invisible censorship.

In order to comprehend the energy of American creativity one cannot just stand and stare dumbfounded at the Brooklyn Bridge, as did Mayakovsky, who wrote an ode to the Brooklyn Bridge as a marvel of modern technology. America is the Brooklyn Bridge *plus* the London Bridge transferred and installed in the Arizona desert.

## 10

The freedom of physical and spiritual risk should be measured on the frontiers where that risk turns into failure, self-destruction, madness, nonsense, game. These are the Open Frontiers of America.

## 11

If the elegance and functionality of the Hoover Dam are America's response to the perfection of Mona Lisa's smile, let us talk then about the end of Western Civilization.

The monstrous beauty and uselessness of San Simeon represent the moment in which the stupidity of shameless richness explodes into a new formula, according to which it is allowed to turn everything upside down in order to start from scratch.

The secret of the fascinating and "inhuman" qualities of Manhattan, which are stubbornly conserved and regenerated, consists in the chaos which *stubbornly refuses to be ordered* and thereby keeps open all roads toward the permanent creation of new beginnings.

The freedom of risk is paid in blood and enjoyment of life, which is nothing but a healthy nonsense.

## 12

Perhaps we are dealing with machinery that has a built-in acceleration mechanism, while someone forgot to install a brake?

That remains to be seen.

## 13

During the past two hundred years greedy pioneer America brought over from black Africa a multimillion Gulag of unpaid slaves. Now, at the center of the beginning of America's new identity, there is a living reservoir of beautiful and dangerous black energy which will bring new beginnings. Or new ends.

Like so many other centers, radiating still invisible blue rays.

## Discovery of Man on the Moon

## 1

It was the night between August 20 and 21, 1969, on the open Atlantic.

Bojana and I were on our way back from America to Europe, on the Italian ocean liner *Rafaele*.

Two days earlier, apart from the sea, there was nothing around us. I was waiting for the Azores to appear, on account of Mayakovsky.

The Azores duly appeared and stately sailed past us, on their way to America.

"And life will pass by, like the Azores did."

It seemed as if we were sailing through the lines of the Great Vladimir. He did not sail out of this life like a tame, lazy island; he blew out his brain with a revolver bullet. But that's another story.

That evening in the ship's cinema we saw Toshiro Mifune and Lee Marvin in Boorman's *Hell in the Pacific*. It was strange, it was a good prelude to what was going to happen to us that night.

In the middle of the ocean—a ship, a cinema in the ship, in the cinema—an ocean, but not this ocean, the *other* ocean, at the Antipodes.

Nobody slept that night.



All the ship's drawing rooms were full of people, in semidarkness and silence. Everybody was watching Armstrong and Aldrin, the first steps of the men on the Moon.

It all came in poetically smudged video-images, like Norman MacLaren's *Pas de deux*. Our compatriots, the earthlings, did not walk, it was more like hopping and floating in the no-atmosphere of the Moon, it was more like that time when we were fish than when we ventured on our first steps, being one year old.

It was very solemn, that TV watching, and it went on for hours. This was not watching but *being present*, accompanied by the awareness that at the same moment hundreds of millions of other men, maybe even a billion of them, were doing the same thing.

In that act of mass baptism, we were becoming, all together, compatriots-earthlings, soaked in highly primitive emotion, the feeling that we, the men of Earth, have set out on a new journey. Sitting by a TV set on that night meant the approval of that risk, acceptance of all new worries and perils, readiness to be surprised: we are off, come what may.

State and national frontiers were ajar, slackened. All together, we were following the Earth Team, not the American Team. (The term "Race with Russians" retains a sense only in the dumb linear logic of people still believing that the earth is flat, still seeing the world from "here" to "there." What "race" is possible, once you start *in all directions*?)

Later, the coming out of the astronauts from the spacecraft and walking-floating in Space showed even more obviously—with that so prominent umbilical cord—that we were faced with a *dramatization of the act of birth*, that the whole fantastic-science-fiction theater performance was, in fact, a *celebration of human birth*.

In that way the *discovery of man* was performed on the Moon.

## 2

The ship was sailing silently over the ocean, there were people in the drawing rooms in the ship, TV sets in the drawing rooms, and the Moon on TV screens. I was coming into these drawing rooms full of silent people, and I was going out to watch the Moon from the deck.

Jules Verne:

We have descended twenty thousand leagues under the sea and we have stepped on the moon. We went to the center of the Earth and we have entered the human brain.

## 3

Far, far away, Jules Verne floated in the dark sky, disguised as the Moon, and very lonely.